

# Michigan

## PARENTS' GUIDE TO ASSESSMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Overview of new assessments, which measure student proficiency against more rigorous standards
- Sample test items
- Overview of accountability for students, teachers, and schools
- Additional resources for parents



**In 2010, Michigan adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics. The CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in English language arts and mathematics as they progress through grades K-12.**

**In Spring 2015, Michigan will roll out new assessments aligned to the CCSS. The new assessments are being used to gauge how well students are mastering the standards and, ultimately, how ready they are for further career education and training and/or college.**

### **WHAT ARE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?**

The Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics are designed to enhance and improve student learning. Because the CCSS have greater clarity and rigor and are relevant to the real world, students gain the knowledge and skills they need for career and college success. The CCSS are also robust, ensuring a future U.S. workforce that can compete in the global economy.

The CCSS emphasize fewer topics and stress not only procedural skills, but also conceptual and critical thinking. Additionally, students build knowledge from grade to grade, enabling them to master important concepts before moving on to others.

**The standards are not a curriculum.** Decisions about curriculum, instruction, materials, resources, and textbooks are left to local districts and schools that know their students best.

The CCSS were developed through a state-led initiative, spearheaded by governors and state superintendents, in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, college faculty, parents, and education experts. They build on the excellent foundation laid across multiple states and have been internationally benchmarked to ensure rigor. To date, more than 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS.

# CCSS-Aligned Assessments

## WHY NEW ASSESSMENTS?

Teachers and principals talk a lot about assessments used to measure students' academic achievement. This parent guide highlights the end-of-year summative state assessments that focus on student progress toward mastering state standards and program and school effectiveness.

New summative assessments are intended to address concerns that parents, educators, and employers have had about current state assessments—namely that they measure ability to memorize facts, rather than the skills to think critically and apply knowledge.

## WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS?

The new assessments for English language arts and mathematics will enable educators and parents to deepen their understanding of student progress from grade to grade—and just as importantly, identify any gaps in progress so they can address them—**well before students enter college or the workforce.**

### Types of assessments

**Formative:** Also known as assessments for learning, occur while learning is still underway so that instruction and learning tactics can be adjusted to get closer to the learning target

**Interim/Benchmark:** Also known as short-cycle summative assessments, are typically administered periodically throughout the year (e.g. every few months, quarterly)

**Summative:** Also known as assessments of learning, take place after learning has occurred to determine if students have learned intended learning outcomes

## New English language arts assessments:

- Ask students to read more complex fiction and nonfiction texts and use evidence from these texts to answer questions, make inferences, and present persuasive arguments
- Emphasize literacy across all content areas, not just English
- Test writing at every grade level

## New mathematics assessments:

- Go beyond multiple-choice questions and present students with multi-step problems, conceptual questions, and real-world applications
- Ask students to not only get answers correct, but also explain how they arrived at those answers
- Cover fewer topics in greater depth, focusing on the most critical areas

## Benefits of new assessments in English language arts and mathematics

- Scores provide students, parents, and teachers with insight into college and career readiness early enough to address issues and provide extra support where needed.
- Computer adaptive assessments will replace pencil-and-paper tests and can adjust the difficulty of questions based on student response. A student who answers correctly will receive a more challenging item, while an incorrect answer generates an easier question. This method provides students with a more engaging test experience, is more time-efficient, and—especially for low- or high-achieving students—produces more accurate results than traditional methods.

## Who is developing the new assessments?

Because CCSS is a state-led initiative, each state across the country chose to join one of two consortia of states working together to develop new assessments based on Common Core State Standards. These are the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

Michigan is a member of the Smarter Balanced along with more than 20 other states and territories. However, decisions about many aspects of the assessments remain at the state level, in partnership with local educators. Read more about the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium at [www.SmarterBalanced.org](http://www.SmarterBalanced.org)



**NOTE: While taking advantage of technology, new assessments are designed to work with common computing resources in schools today. However, states may offer a paper-and-pencil option for the first three years.**

- New assessments will allow Michigan to compare student performance not only across schools and districts statewide, but also with other states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards.
- The new assessments are designed to provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners—allowing these students to perform to their potential. The goal of the accommodations is to make the assessments more accessible and to produce results that are valid for these students. The intention is not to give them an advantage over other students. For students with disabilities, the online assessments will address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers. These students will be able to take an accommodated test to meet their needs. Accommodations have also been developed to help English language learners demonstrate their knowledge, regardless of their level of proficiency in English.

## Career and College Readiness:

Career and college-ready students possess the skills necessary to earn a self-sustaining wage and participate in postsecondary opportunities without remediation. This means that they:

- Use **technology and tools** strategically in learning and communicating
- Use **argument and reasoning** to do research, construct arguments, and critique the reasoning of others
- **Communicate and collaborate** effectively with a variety of audiences
- **Solve problems**, construct explanations and design solutions






# Sample questions by grade level

The following questions are representative of those found on the new assessments. For more examples, [www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test](http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test).

## EXAMPLE OF A 5TH GRADE MATH QUESTION

### SAMPLE ITEM

Five swimmers compete in a 50-meter race. The finish time for each swimmer is shown in the video.

	23.42		23.35
	23.18		23.24
	23.21		

Explain how the results of the race would change if the race used a clock that rounded to the nearest tenth.

**Explanation:**

## EXAMPLE OF A 6TH GRADE ENGLISH QUESTION

### SAMPLE ITEM

Students are asked to read the essay “Planes on the Brain” by Elisabeth Deffner, from Faces Magazine, and answer the following questions:

1. How does the author emphasize the point that the TAM program was a positive influence on the sisters’ lives? Use details from the text to support your answer.
2. Highlight the parts of the text that provide evidence to support the idea that the Tuskegee Airmen were historically important.
3. What does the author mean by “the sky is no longer the limit”? Use details from the text to support your response.

**Answer:**

## EXAMPLE OF AN 11TH GRADE ENGLISH QUESTION

### SAMPLE ITEM

**The following excerpt is from a writer’s first draft of a narrative essay. Read the excerpt. Then rewrite it, revising it to correct errors.**

I had no idea what to expect when I walked into the arena. There were people everywhere, most of them clad in brightly colored jersey’s with different players’ names on the back of them. There were some names I couldnt even pronounce. Me and my friend made our way to the corridor that led to the ice rink. The minute I stepped through the doorway, I could feel a rush of cold air hit my face. I could actually smell the ice! I never thought ice had a smell, but it really does. The next thing I noticed was the size, of the ice rink. There were lines and circles painted all over it, and I knew immediately I wouldn’t understand the rules. We found our seats, and it wasn’t long before the game started. We sat so close to the action that I felt as if I was right in the middle of it, the action was so intense it was hard to follow the puck, keep an eye on the players, and to figure out which team was ahead. When the home team scored a goal. The entire arena erupted with cheering that was so loud, I bet it was heard across town. by the end of the game, I felt so many emotions: delight, disappointment, fear, and excitement. Mostly, though, I felt in awe of the athletes who played this game. They are much more tougher than I ever expected. I suspect others new to hockey will be as impressed as me by this fast, interesting game.

**Now rewrite the excerpt, revising it to correct errors.**

**Answer:**

## What Parents Can Expect

The new assessments measure deeper knowledge and skills that are particularly important to students' futures, including problem-solving, writing, and critical thinking. The assessment results provide students, parents, and teachers with the ability to address issues well before students are ready to graduate.

Because rigor is higher, student achievement scores may initially be lower. A dip should not necessarily be interpreted as a decline in student learning or in educator performance. Educators expect the short-term decline to improve because as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and online testing, they will be better equipped to meet the challenges.

This is a new system with a new way of scoring. Therefore, it is not possible to directly compare new scores with old ones.

### How will schools support students during the transition?

Schools have created a variety of models to assist students who are struggling with the standards. In-class adjustments based on ongoing in-class assessment results, as well as remediation and summer courses, are just a few support strategies.



#### TAKE ACTION:

Parents can work with school or district curriculum directors to learn about the new curriculum and understand how to support their children to minimize any dips in assessment scores.

### How will students and teachers be held accountable?

Once the new assessments are implemented in 2014-15, the Michigan Department of Education will review its accountability plan. The plan will include school and district accountability procedures and indicate how to address students who do not meet proficiency levels.

In addition, results from the tests will be one source of information to inform teacher and administrator evaluations.



#### TAKE ACTION:

Parents need to pay close attention to the new accountability system put in place so they can better advocate for their children. Parents' collective voice is critical to ensure that testing is implemented well and with enough resources to ensure success. The Michigan Department of Education should include parents and teachers in thoughtful conversations based on trust, collaboration and respect. If you would like additional details about how students, teachers and schools will be held accountable or more information on assessments in general, please call Division of Accountability Services at 877-560-8378. Here are some questions that you might want to ask:

- What will happen if my child does not meet proficiency on the new assessments?
- How will teacher evaluations be affected if students don't meet proficiency levels?
- How will school ratings change based on results of the new assessments?

# Preparing and supporting your child

- Discuss the new tests with your child. Make sure he or she is not scared or anxious going into the new tests.
- With an older child, explain that the new assessments were created to help him or her better prepare for college and career.
- Explain to your child that the tests will initially be more challenging. Tell your child you have high expectations and that you are there to help every step of the way.
- Review test results with your child. Bring the teacher into the discussion as needed.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home and make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and a nutritious breakfast before a test.

## Staying informed and involved

- Become familiar with the Common Core State Standards.
- Explore practice tests through an interactive online platform, visit: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test>.
- Read all comments written by the teacher on your child's assignments, tests, and report cards. Ask teachers to explain anything that is unclear and discuss how you can best work together to address comments.
- Monitor your child's progress. If your child needs extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, after-school clubs, or other resources.
- Do not judge your child based on a single test score. Tests are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other factors that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she is feeling on test day or the particular classroom setting.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his or her progress. Ask for activities to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's proficiency.

## Additional Resources

- For a more detailed look at what CCSS mean at each grade level, visit: [www.pta.org/parents](http://www.pta.org/parents)
- For more information on the Career and College Ready Michigan and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), visit: <http://www.michiganccr.org>
- For more information on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, of which Michigan is a member, visit: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>





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